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RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 1522

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KABUL 003264

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, SA/PB, S/CT,  
EUR/RPM  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG  
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN  
OSD FOR BREZINSKI  
CENTCOM FOR CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 7/22/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: PRT/QALAT: GOVERNOR, CJTF-76 PUSH SHAJOY DISTRICT  
MULLAHS AND ELDERS FOR COOPERATION IN RETURN FOR DETAINEE  
RELEASE

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Mary Townswick, for reasons 1  
.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: At Governor Arman's request, CJTF commander MG Freakley met with mullahs and elders from Shajoy district, an area which has become more problematical in recent months. The ultimate objective is the release of a BAF detainee, Mullah Riais, in return for his allegiance to the GoA, plus information and allegiance to the GoA from the Shajoy mullahs and elders. End summary.

BACKGROUND

¶2. (C) Prior to the Sec Def visit on July 11, CJTF-76 MG Freakley met with Zabul Governor Arman, who proposed this meeting with mullahs and elders. Several of them had met with President Karzai a few weeks before when the Governor was in Kabul. Although not a Provincial Security Assessment (PSA) focus district, Shajoy has been a traditional route for Taliban to cross from Pakistan (via Shamulzai) across the Ring Road en route to Day Chopan. However, since the spring, the situation there has worsened, in part due to the Provincial and District Chiefs of Police.

¶3. (U) There were 23 mullahs and elders from Shajoy district at the meetings, representing several tribes. In addition to Governor Arman, Provincial Chief of Police General Nur Mohamed Paktin, NDS Chief COL Shah Zada, and ANA kandak commander COL

Rasik attended, plus a few other provincial officials. In addition to MG Freakley and his staffers, TF Warrior commander and XO and PRT commander and PRTOFF attended.

Lack of Reliable Intel, Cultural Awareness, Development; Detained Mullahs

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**¶4.** (U) The meeting was somewhat scripted., Gov Arman introduced the attendees, and told the mullahs and elders he wanted them to have a better understanding of the Coalition Forces (CF), and had therefore arranged this face-to-face dialogue.

**¶5.** (U) After the Governor, three mullahs spoke, expressing appreciation for this meeting. One praised the Governor for working and consulting with elders, and claimed that was why things were better in Zabul now than in Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces. Another hoped that the CF would not make a mistake that the Russians did, of searching homes by themselves. However, he added, it was acceptable if local elders accompanied the CF and entered the homes first.

**¶6.** (U) A second concern of the mullahs and elders was reliability of intelligence. One recommended the CF contact the NDS, ANP, and ANA before conducting any operations. Another noted that due to tribal hostilities, people will falsely accuse others of being Taliban (one Mullah Askif (sic), at

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Guantanamo, being an alleged example). Others felt that foreign parties, including the Pakistani ISI, were trying to cause friction between Afghanistan and the CF. One commented that although Afghanistan's neighbors interfere, since the U.S. is so far away from Afghanistan that actually demonstrates that the U.S. has no ulterior motives. Another claimed that most villagers do not support the Taliban. However, CF (plus ANP and ANA) would search an area where a Taliban attack or IED had originated and arrest innocent villagers for having been in proximity. The interlocutor offered no recommendations as to how this issue should be resolved.

**¶7.** (U) Another interlocutor stated that one cannot tame, Afghans by fighting with them; one must negotiate. He also noted that Americans do not know much of Afghan culture; that is another reason they should work through mullahs and elders.

**¶8.** (U) Other comments involved the lack of development. One speaker opined there had been no GoA benefit to Zabul for 52 years, until the past year under Gov Arman, who he hoped would remain here. Another speaker (head of a construction consortium bidding for PRT projects) opined that results of development had not met expectations and complained of cancelled projects. He also said that the education system was broken and that 60 percent of Taliban recruits join because they need money; thus, jobs are needed as an alternative.

**¶9.** (U) One claimed he knew of a mullah in detention, who, although innocent, would be pro-GoA if released. He further added that the elders would vouch for him. Another noted several attendees have family members in detention, some of whom are in fact guilty. However, if released, they would commit no further offenses, he said.

CJTF Response

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¶10. (U) MG Freakley thanked the attendees for their presence, reminding them that the GoA had requested the CF to be here to help with security and reconstruction, including education. He reminded them that the CF are not at war with the Afghan people, but rather those who would hurt the Afghan people and the rest of the world.

¶11. (U) He then addressed the cultural sensitivity issue, stating that it bothered him that his soldiers were not respecting elders, or searching homes without elders being present (which is against CF SOPs). He wants his soldiers to respect the elders, the mullahs, Islam, and Afghan customs. He also promised to work more closely with the Governor, ANA, ANP and NDS, reminding them that the CF work "for," not "with" the Governor and GoA.

¶12. (U) Linking security and development, he emphasized that the Governor and the CF both want a better life for Afghans and want to carry out

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projects in small villages. However, security concerns created limitations. MG Freakley offered that if the elders would help provide security, then the CF could execute more development projects. He continued that, as soon as security permits, the UN will open an office in Zabul, which he understands will happen next month. The UN wants to also get out to the villages, but will not send its staff out to places where they may be beheaded (a reference to the Indian telecom engineer who was kidnapped and beheaded in Shajoy about two months previously).

¶13. (U) MG Freakley then got to the key point of the meeting. He said there were two basic alternatives for the enemy: Negotiate and build a future for Afghanistan, or else be killed or captured. While he preferred negotiation, he was willing to use his power against the enemy.

Mulla Riais case  
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¶14. (C) Referring to Mullah Riais Abdul Ali, MG Freakley stated the CF knew that he worked with Mullah Allam to build IEDs and was implicated in the kidnapping and beheading of the Indian engineer several months ago. Some of the mullahs claimed that these allegations were not true. However, they all promised that if Riais were released, he would meet with the Governor and promise to support the GoA, and that they themselves would promise to keep him loyal to the GoA.

¶15. (C) MG Freakley next asked for their promise to help find Mullah Allam and Mullah Zarbai, and to work with the NDS. One mullah present claimed they did not know Zarbai, and that Allam is in Pakistan, not Shajoy district, but that they would report IEDs that they learned about.

¶16. (C) MG Freakley sweetened the pot a little by offering to provide more humanitarian assistance (even though Shajoy has received quite a bit already from the CF). If the mullahs kept their promises, then MG Freakley promised to try to release Riais to them within the next 30 days. He also asked them for a list of other possible detainees that they were interested in.

Governor's Wrap-Up  
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¶17. (U) Gov Arman wrapped up the meeting by emphatically lecturing the attendees that it is against Islam to oppose the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Furthermore, he emphasized that true Muslims would work with the GoA to improve Afghanistan. He pointed out he was saying this in front of the Americans present, who are helping to rebuild Afghanistan, to demonstrate that the U.S. is not anti-Islam.

Comment

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¶18. (U) By bringing MG Freakley to meet with the elders, Governor Arman demonstrated both his desire to work with local leaders, as well as his clout with the CF. We hope the proposed bargain will work out. If not, the Governor and the CF can at least show that they made a good faith effort to work with the mullahs and elders from Shajoy.

¶19. (U) This cable has been cleared with TF Warrior and Qalat PRT commanders and CJTF-76.

NEUMANN